



Vermont State Workforce Development Board

Health Care Committee - Meeting Minutes

March 31st, 2022

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Committee Members in Attendance: Wendy Trafton, Ena Backus, Jill Olson, Mary Kate Mohlman, Patrick Gallivan, Johanna Beliveau, Jessa Barnard, Baron Glassgow, Lisa Fox, Katie Marvin

Guests in Attendance: Victoria Biondolillo, Abby Rhim

Ena Backus began the meeting at 4:03 pm. She started by recognizing the accomplishment of bringing the Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan Advisory Group and the Vermont State Workforce Development Board. She then asked for group for introductions.

Wendy Trafton, Deputy Director of Health Care Reform, Agency of Human Services

Victoria Biondolillo, Executive Director, Vermont State Workforce Development Board

Mary Kate Mohlman, Vermont Director of Public Policy, Bi-State Primary Care Association

Jill Olson, Executive Director, VNAs of Vermont

Johanna Beliveau, President and CEO, Visiting Nurse and Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire

Patrick Gallivan, Executive Director, Vermont State Dental Society

Jessa Barnard, Executive Director, Vermont Medical Society

Baron Glassgow, Executive Director, Vermont Association of Naturopathic Physicians

Ena Backus then asked Victoria Biondolillo to summarize the work of the State Workforce Development Board.

Victoria Biondolillo began by describing the State Workforce Development Board as a large body, founded within the WIOA statute by President Obama, which aims to coordinate the workforce system with federal funding and state investments. It is a convener of all necessary parties within the system in order to coordinate with employers and employees to ensure that the workforce system is effective and efficient. She noted that due to its size, the Board has been relatively ineffective. She stressed the need for expert-based committees to attack problems, sector by sector.

Ena Backus then asked Lisa Fox to introduce herself after recently joining the meeting.

Lisa Fox, Associate Dean of Nursing, Vermont Technical College

Ena Backus then shared that the Advisory Group was established by the Legislature in 2020 to help maintain Vermont's Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan that was updated in October of 2021. She mentioned how exciting it is to finally partner with the State Workforce Development Board, one of the goals within the Strategic Plan, in order to between align and leverage the resources that the Board has to coordinate sectors across the state. She then asked Katie Marvin to introduce herself, just having joined the meeting.

Katie Marvin, Family Doctor, Lamoille Health Partners and Current President of Vermont Academy of Family Physicians

Ena Backus then continued to explain the Strategic Plan, including how it was developed with many participants within this meeting today, and then presented to the Green Mountain Care Board. Since then, the Advisory Group has been acting on the approved Plan through various activities. Ena then suggested it would be helpful to recap key recommendations within the Plan in order to reflect on progress and next steps. She began by reviewing the "Financial Incentives for Health Care Workers to Live and Work as Permanent Employees in Vermont" slide.

Patrick Gallivan then raised the question of money dedicated to different health care providers for recruitment and retention. He saw that dentistry was not included and had been left out of the conversation. He asked the group for transparency with conversations moving forward regarding who is getting dollars.

Jill Olson apologized to Patrick Gallivan. She noted that things were moving very quickly with the legislature, mostly behind the scenes, and that it is unclear how much the Advisory Group or Ena could have done, unfortunately. Pivoting, Jill asked the group if it made the most sense to identify work that still needs development, rather than review what is already happening. She then noted the development of a data hub which needs to be focused on.

Ena Backus agreed, saying that the group should work through what is not done and what needs to be prioritized. She also stressed that the group can revisit workforce development efforts and ensure that things have been completed. She then noted the data hub and its status.

Jill Olson noted that the data hub is an example of a resource that is not completed, and the group should prioritize seeing through. She then noted that previously, there were many objectives that were left up to interagency task forces and the committee needs to circle back with those efforts.

Ena Backus agreed. She noted many efforts and ideas, including the data center or financial incentives, which need to be picked up and moved forward once again. She used UVM nurse graduates as an example, sharing that she isn't confident they would know where to look to take advantage of incentive programs like tax credits. She noted the need for further conversation and potential development in these previously discussed ideas.

Jessa Barnard then mentioned assessment of existing loan repayment plans and whether they should be increased or reassessed. She wanted to make sure that within these high-level discussions, we not only address new professional types and funding needs but continue conversations regarding what we already have available.

Ena Backus agreed. She noted that in the Governor's budget, the group believed the loan repayment funding was not adequate and why there was recommendation for expansion. She went on to say that it is important that the group continues to look at a broader set of professional types taking advantage of loan repayment programs today.

Jessa Barnard agreed with this statement. She went on to say that those very highlights of inadequacy must be identified throughout the whole Strategic Plan. She also mentioned the importance of transparency so both students and employers can find out about eligibility.

Ena Backus added that AHEC would oversee many of those programs and not all group members are present today.

Jessa Barnard noted that under H.703, some new loan repayment proposed would be administered by VSAC.

Ena Backus added that AHEC is responsible for current programs, VSAC might be for future.

Jessa Barnard agreed with this statement.

Ena Backus then asked the group if they should move to the next category, regarding recommendations around education and training.

Mary Kate Mohlman then highlighted that there are other issues that need to be cross referenced with health care financial incentives conversations, including childcare, transportation, employment opportunities for spouses, etc. While they are not the responsibility of this group, they must be considered. She highlighted this intersection for the Workforce Development Board staff members.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed, noting that the large issues are all intertwined. She highlighted the individual committees under the State Workforce Development Board and how integration could serve as a tool, when needed.

Ena Backus agreed, asking for information at future meetings regarding updates on other sector initiatives. She then recognized that with the groups targeted conversations surrounding workforce and health care, there is an overarching package of broader workforce development reform.

Victoria Biondolillo said she would be happy to provide updates and answer questions at future meetings.

Ena Backus asked for other comments.

Jessa Barnard asked how the partnership between the Advisory Group and the State Workforce Development Board would work. She then noted Jill Olson's membership on the Board, wondering if she would serve as a representative or if dialogue would more be between Ena Backus and the State Workforce Development Board's staff.

Victoria Biondolillo welcomed committee members to attend full board meetings or engage in any way they would prefer. She noted that it would be helpful to hear from health care committee members who have a 50,000 foot level view on what is happening and bring those views to full board meetings. The integration can be whatever folks want it to be.

Ena Backus thanked Victoria Biondolillo for the opportunity to cross pollinate. She then asked the group for any further discussion on financial incentives from the Strategic Plan and any additional work that needs to occur.

Mary Kate Mohlman then returned to Jill's recommendation of addressing things that have been completed and then pivoting to the things in route to finally, what are they things that can be worked on after the legislative session. She stressed that things already in process are likely most pressing.

Ena Backus asked if there were any financial incentives that should be addressed right now, in process.

Jill Olson voiced that loan repayment and scholarships are both in development and in high demand.

Ena Backus then asked Patrick Gallivan if there was anything that he wanted to add regarding Vermonters attending dental school.

Patrick Gallivan said that he did not currently but would investigate.

Ena Backus noted that dental knowledge is not something this group has much bandwidth in. She then asked Patrick if he could prompt development in that field.

Patrick Gallivan agreed.

Mary Kate Mohlman then noted the difficulty understanding state and federal financial assistance options. She stressed that she has never fully been able to grasp all the opportunities available and shared that she imagines she is not the only one.

Ena Backus shared that there are potential avenues that have been identified options, including the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. However, she shared that for this information to be distributed, it must be organized and attached to a council or entity that can then further explain resources to folks. She then noted a potential position, put forth by the Legislature, that would work specifically to implement the Strategic Plan and serve as that touch point.

Mary Kate Mohlman noted how helpful that position would be, especially regarding transparency.

Jessa Barnard stressed the importance of counseling, agreeing with Ena Backus. While it is great to have organized information in one place, an actual person to walk a prospective nurse or dentist through options and what applies to them, would be very helpful.

Ena Backus noted the time. She said that moving forward, tracking where Vermont is with implementation and where the state is going, is crucial work for this group. She then noted that there are other categories in the Strategic Plan, including education and training recommendations, which might be good to focus on at the next meeting.

Mary Kate Mohlman returned to the data center and flagged her concern surrounding data sharing agreements.

Ena Backus agreed with this concern. She said that regardless of current status, it is important that the data center must have some authority around it in order to receive data from other state agencies and entities.

Mary Kate Mohlman noted that if the data hub is going to move forward, there needs to be some wording around a data sharing arrangement.

Ena Backus agreed. She then offered an offline discussion regarding the technical language and what would need to be explicitly said in order to move forward with the data hub. She then asked Lisa Fox if she would like to speak on behalf of OPR and the group she has been convening with.

Lisa Fox noted that the group has been meeting regularly in order to encompass all elements within the Strategic Plan. She noted that the group has been trying to look at all needs and how to move forward, as one voice, backing up all elements within the Strategic Plan. She specifically mentioned alternative pathways to enter the health care education system. She then shared that she felt a lot of progress has been made and how exciting it is to see that.

Ena Backus noted how if all groups (OPR group, State Workforce Development Board and Strategic Plan Advisory Group) can be in the same space at certain points, as the Strategic Plan is being implemented, that collaboration will be both exciting and helpful. She then asked the group what the regular cadence of meetings should be.

Abby Rhim told the group that she would send out an email regarding future scheduling.

Victoria Biondolillo noted that most committees are meeting monthly but that we can establish a regular time depending on feedback.

Ena Backus welcomed feedback via email regarding anything mentioned in today's meeting.

Mary Kate Mohlman suggested having a lawyer look at acceptable data sharing usage out of the Department of Labor.

Ena Backus thanked everyone for their time and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Abby Rhim.

Abby Rhim, Executive Assistant

Vermont State Workforce Development Board